




Speech By  
**Margaret Nightingale**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 September 2024

**CHILD SAFE ORGANISATIONS BILL; WORKING WITH CHILDREN (RISK MANAGEMENT AND SCREENING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms NIGHTINGALE** (Inala—ALP) (2.36 pm): I rise today in support of the cognate bills and will speak specifically to the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. I am proud, as the member for Inala, an electorate that benefits from a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, to sit on the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee and to play a role in this legislation—legislation that will make a significant and positive change in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families in my community and in communities across Queensland.

During the committee's inquiry into the bill there was significant feedback. This included recommendations of the Queensland Family and Child Commission's kinship care report and broader stakeholder support for removing the requirements for kinship carers and adult members of kinship care households to obtain a blue card. The committee heard that the current requirements pose significant barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kin to care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. As the committee noted in its report, caring for family and supporting family connection is not employment and the blue card system is not suitable for kinship care. In response to this feedback the committee recommended that the bill be amended to remove the requirement for adult members of kinship carer households to obtain a blue card.

I have heard firsthand from many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in my electorate of the substantial barriers for kin who wish to care for their relatives and the difference that removing this requirement would make. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families want the best for their children. They want them to grow up in safe homes that allow them to thrive, sustaining cultural continuity and connection to kin and country to create strong future generations. The existing blue card scheme, while well intentioned, was originally designed with a focus on employment suitability rather than the unique needs of kinship care. The scheme has unintentionally created obstacles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who wish to care for their own kin, undermining the principles of family and cultural continuity that are central to the wellbeing of these children. This is particularly concerning given the significant number of Aboriginal children in residential and foster-care placements.

Removing this requirement will allow more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be placed with their extended families, enhancing their chances for improved outcomes and fostering a stronger sense of cultural continuity. This change acknowledges that caring for family members is not an employment role but a fundamental familial and cultural responsibility. By passing this bill and adopting the committee's recommendations, we are taking a crucial step toward a more culturally appropriate and supportive system.

Following the passage of the bill, the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services will work to develop a fit-for-purpose kinship carer screening framework that is both culturally appropriate and effective, upholding our commitment to child safety while respecting cultural practices. The bill aligns with our goals of backing frontline services and honouring the rich cultural history of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. By removing these barriers, we are not only facilitating better care for children but also promoting stronger connections to kin and country. The continuation of culture is an issue that is close to my heart and I am pleased to see that, with the passage of this bill, more First Nations children will have this opportunity.

The bill incorporates a staged approach to reform, providing time for comprehensive consultation and development of the new screening framework. This will ensure that all stakeholders, particularly First Nations communities, have a voice in shaping a system that meets their needs while maintaining high standards of child protection. I am proud of the great kinship carers in my electorate. I want you to know that you matter. I am proud that again, with this bill, the Miles Labor government is doing what matters for Queenslanders. I commend this bill to the House.